

2,700 Year Old Yogi in Samadhi Found in Indus Valley Civilization Archaeological Site



The 2,700 year old skeletal remains of an ancient yogi sitting in samadhi have been found in an Indus valley civilization archaeological site located at Balathal, Rajasthan.

Many Indus Valley seals depict pictures of yogis sitting in lotus position. Here are two examples showing ancient yogis sitting in meditation and keeping their hands on their knees as done in modern yoga meditations. If we see

Forgotten Buddhas: Yogis & Sadhus of the Past, Present and The Future

A sadhu, also spelled saddhu, is a religious ascetic, mendicant (monk) or any holy person in Hinduism and Jainism who has renounced the worldly life. They are sometimes alternatively referred to as sannyasi or vairagi.

It literally means one who practises a " sadhana" or keenly follows a path of spiritual discipline. Although the vast majority of sādhus are yogīs, not all yogīs are sādhus. The sādhu is solely dedicated to achieving mokṣa (liberation), the fourth and final aśrama (stage of life), through meditation and contemplation of Brahman. Sādhus often wear simple clothing, such saffron-coloured clothing in Hinduism, white or nothing in Jainism, symbolising their sannyāsa (renunciation of worldly possessions). A female mendicant in Hinduism and Jainism is often called a sadhvi, or in some texts as aryika.



Siddhartha Gautama, who would one day become known as Buddha ("enlightened one" or "the awakened"), lived in Nepal during the 6th to 4th century B.C.

Who is Buddha ?

People don't really know who Buddha was, and contrary to what most people in the Western world think, he was neither a God nor a legend. He was a real man that lived 2500 years ago in India.

The Buddha was born in the Lumbini woods, near the town of Kapilavastu (in modern day Nepal near the Indian border). His birth name was Siddhārtha Gautama (Shakyamuni Gotama in Japanese). Even though he lived for about eighty years, the dates of his birth and death are not established with certainty. Most Historians say he was born in 563 BC and died in 486 BC.

Gautama's father, Suddhodana Gautama, was the leader of the warrior class of Kapilavastu. Gautama's mother, Queen Māyā (Māyādevī) died shortly after his birth, and he was raised in luxury by his father and his father's new wife.

Gautama showed an early taste for meditation, reflection, and self-growth. By his father's wishes, he married young and took part in the public life of the king's court. He had a son whom he named Rahula.

Gautama began his quest for Enlightenment at the age of twenty-nine when he managed to go outside the palace walls. Throughout Gautama's entire life before this, his father had constantly kept him inside the palace walls to protect him from suffering and the reality of the world.

On his first visit outside the palace, he came across an entirely new reality, a world that he never knew existed. He saw the suffering of a newborn baby, a sick man, an old man, and a rotting corpse. He suddenly realized that suffering is common to all of humanity.

After making the acquaintance of a mendicant monk, he calmly and peacefully decided to abandon his family, wealth, and power to achieve Enlightenment. Buddhists call this decision "The Great Renunciation", and they consider it a turning point in history.



One night, having made his decision, Gautama left the gigantic palace, abandoning his wife and child to travel the world in search of Enlightenment. He traveled as a beggar in northern India and followed the teachings of many gurus, but he soon found himself dissatisfied.

He continued his quest for Truth as he finally settled in the town of Uruvela, near Gaya, with five men as his disciples who all shared his same goal. Together, they sought to achieve Enlightenment through an incredibly severe practice that involved total deprivation of worldly goods, meditating 10 hours a day, eating only a few grains of rice a day, never talking, and sleeping very little.

One day, after becoming so starved and so weakened from his ascetic practice, he finally collapsed. He was helped by a village girl named Sujata who fed him milk and rice pudding to restore his health. This event made him realize that the extreme lifestyle he was living was very unbalanced and would not bring him Enlightenment.

(...) he developed a practice and way of life that he called "The Middle Way," a path of moderation away from the extremes in every aspect of life.

He gradually recovered his health by stopping his extreme practice, though he lost his five disciples who accused him of being a "quitter". Those six years of self-mortification made him understand that extreme asceticism doesn't work and that in all things, balance is necessary.

In response to his experience, he developed a practice and way of life that he called "The Middle Way", a path of moderation away from the extremes in every aspect of life.

Buddha, The Awakened One

One evening, at the age of thirty-five, he sat in dhyana (a Sanskrit term with the same meaning as Zazen in Japanese, and Chan in Chinese) at the feet of a pipal tree, a tree later known as "The Bodhi Tree", in Bodh Gaya, India.

It was here that he became determined not to stop meditating before reaching Enlightenment (satori in Japanese), awakening to the reality of the Universe.

After 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained Enlightenment. It was at this moment that he became "The Buddha" - The Awakened One.



At the moment of his Enlightenment, he experienced a sublime intuitive understanding of existence, and he understood the cause of earthly suffering, as well as how it could be eradicated. His observations about suffering became known as the Four Noble Truths. He also developed the Noble Eightfold Path, one of his principal teachings, which is described as the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Both the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are at the center of Buddhism, as well as Zen.

Having decided to preach his teaching or Dharma, the Buddha returned to his former disciples in Benares. Amazed by his wisdom, sincerity, and knowledge, they took him again as their teacher, and he was ordained as a monk. Together with him, they formed the first group of Buddhist monks, called a Sangha in Sanskrit.

Shortly after forming the first sangha, he preached his first sermon in the "Deer Park" near Benares. This sermon contained the essence of Buddhism, in which he elaborated on his doctrine of The Middle Way. Accompanied by his disciples, the Buddha traveled in the valleys of the Ganges spreading his philosophy, making disciples, and creating a group of monks where everyone was admitted without any discrimination. Later on, he returned to his hometown and preached to his father, his wife, and other family members.

A wealthy admirer paid for the construction of a monastery in Savatthi, which became the Buddha's main residence and teaching center. The Buddha's teachings spread, and more monasteries were built in major cities along the Ganges. Even as it gained prominence, his dharma remained a way of life, a philosophy than a religion.

After a life devoted to spiritual activity, the Buddha died in Kusinagar (in modern day Nepal) at around eighty years of age. Foreseeing his death, he warned his followers about it, but he refused to give them any specific instructions on the continuation of his teaching. Instead, he insisted that he had already taught all that was necessary. His body was

cremated, and his ashes were divided and put into the eight Buddhist temples spread across India.



Mahavira, also known as Vardhamāna, was the twenty-fourth Tirthankara of Jainism. In the Jain tradition, it is believed that Mahavira was born in early part of the 6th-century BC into a royal family in what is now Bihar, India.

Mahavira is regarded as the man who gave Jainism its present-day form; although this is true only in the widest sense. He is sometimes wrongly called "the founder of Jainism".

Mahavira, regarded as the man who gave Jainism its present form

Mahavira is only this world's most recent tirthankara (and will be the last one in this age). It may be more useful to think of him as a reformer and populariser of an ancient way of life rather than as the founder of a faith.

Early life of Mahavira

Mahavira was originally born as Vardhamana in north east India in 599 BCE (that's the traditional date but some modern scholars prefer 540 BCE, or even later).

He was a prince, the son of King Siddhartha and Queen Trishala, who were members of the kshatriya (warrior) caste and followers of the teachings of Parshva.

Mahavira becomes an ascetic

When Prince Vardhamana reached thirty years of age, not long after the death of both his parents, he left the royal palace to live the life of an ascetic, or a sadhana (one who renounces all worldly pleasures and comforts).

He spent twelve and a half years subjecting himself to extremely long, arduous periods of fasting and meditation.

Eventually his efforts bore fruit, and Vardhamana attained Kevalnayan, enlightenment, and therefore was later called Mahavira (the name is from *maha*, great, and *vira*, hero).

Mahavira the teacher

From that day forward Mahavira taught the path he had discovered to other seekers. His teaching career lasted until his physical death in 527 BCE (according to Svetambara texts), when he was 72 years old. After a final period of intensive fasting he attained moksha, the final liberation from all rebirth.

Mahavira added the principle of chastity to the four Jain principles already given by Parshva (no violence, no lying, no stealing, no possessions).

According to tradition Mahavira is said to have established a community of 14,000 monks and 36,000 nuns before he died.

But he certainly did create a large and loyal monastic/ascetic/mendicant community inspired by his teaching. One of his immediate disciples, Jambu, was the last person in this age to achieve enlightenment.



2,700 Year Old Yogi in Samadhi Found in Indus Valley Civilization Archaeological Site. No one knows who he was. A forgotten Buddha? A forgotten Mahavira? An Avatar of Shiva/Vishnu/Brahma?

Śramaṇa (Sanskrit: श्रमण, **Samaṇa** in Pali) means "seeker, one who performs acts of austerity, ascetic". The term refers to several Indian religious movements parallel to but separate from the historical Vedic religion. The Śramaṇa tradition includes Jainism of 9th-century BCE, Buddhism of 6th-century BCE, and others such as Ājīvika, Ajñana and Cārvāka



Several *śramaṇa* movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE (pre-Buddha, pre-Mahavira), and these influenced

both the āstika and nāstika traditions of Indian philosophy. Martin Wilshire states that the Sramana tradition evolved in India over two phases, namely Paccekabuddha and Savaka phases, the former being the tradition of individual ascetic and latter of disciples, and that Buddhism and Jainism ultimately emerged from these as sectarian manifestations. These traditions drew upon already established Brahmanical concepts, states Wiltshire, to formulate their own doctrines. Reginald Ray concurs that Sramana movements already existed and were established traditions in pre-6th century BCE India, but disagrees with Wiltshire that they were nonsectarian before the arrival of Buddha.

According to the Jain Agamas and the Buddhist Pāli Canon, there were other śramaṇa leaders at the time of Buddha. The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16), a śramaṇa named Subhadda mentions:

...those ascetics, samaṇa and Brahmins who have orders and followings, who are teachers, well-known and famous as founders of schools, and popularly regarded as saints, like Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sanjaya Belatthiputta and Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (Mahavira)...

Ajivika was one of the *nāstika* or "heterodox" schools of ancient Indian philosophy, and the ancient school of Indian fatalism.[3] Purportedly founded in the 5th century BCE by Makkhali Gosala, it was a Śramaṇa movement and a major rival of early Buddhism and Jainism. Ājīvikas were organised renunciates who formed discrete communities.

Original scriptures of the Ājīvika school of philosophy may once have existed, but these are currently unavailable and probably lost. Their theories are extracted from mentions of Ajivikas in the secondary sources of ancient Indian literature. Scholars question whether Ājīvika philosophy has been fairly and completely summarized in these secondary sources, as they were written by groups (such as the Buddhists and Jains) competing with and adversarial to the philosophy and religious practices of the Ajivikas. It is therefore likely that much of the information available about the Ājīvikas is inaccurate to some degree, and characterisations of them should be regarded carefully and critically.

The Ājīvika school is known for its Niyati ("Fate") doctrine of absolute determinism,[3] the premise that there is no free will, that everything that has happened, is happening and will happen is entirely preordained

and a function of cosmic principles. Ājīvikas considered the karma doctrine as a fallacy. Ajivika metaphysics included a theory of atoms similar to the Vaisheshika school, where everything was composed of atoms, qualities emerged from aggregates of atoms, but the aggregation and nature of these atoms was predetermined by cosmic forces. Ājīvikas were atheists and rejected the authority of the Vedas, but they believed that in every living being is an ātman – a central premise of Hinduism and Jainism.

Founded in what is now the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Ājīvika philosophy reached the height of its popularity during the rule of the Mauryan emperor Bindusara, around the 4th century BCE. This school of thought thereafter declined, but survived for nearly 2,000 years through the 14th century CE in the southern Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The Ājīvika philosophy, along with the Cārvāka philosophy, appealed most to the warrior, industrial and mercantile classes of ancient Indian society.

केश्यग्निं केशी विषं केशी बिभर्ति रोदसी । केशी विश्वं स्वर्दृशे केशीदं ज्योतिरुच्यते ॥१॥

मुनयो वातरशनाः पिशङ्गा वसते मला । वातस्यानु ध्राजिं यन्ति यद्देवासो अविक्षत
॥२॥

He with the long loose locks (of hair) supports Agni, and moisture, heaven, and earth; He is all sky to look upon: he with long hair is called this light.

The **Munis**, girdled with the wind, wear garments of soil hue; They, following the wind's swift course, go where the Gods have gone before.

— Rig Veda, Hymn 10.136.1-2

Ajñāna was one of the *nāstika* or "heterodox" schools of ancient Indian philosophy, and the ancient school of radical Indian skepticism. It was a Śramaṇa movement and a major rival of early Buddhism and Jainism. They have been recorded in Buddhist and Jain texts. They held that it was impossible to obtain knowledge of metaphysical nature or ascertain the truth value of philosophical propositions; and even if knowledge was possible, it was useless and disadvantageous for final salvation. They

were sophists who specialized in refutation without propagating any positive doctrine of their own.

The Ajñāna claimed that the possibility of knowledge is doubtful since the claims to knowledge were mutually contradictory. Silanka quotes, "They posit the theory that since those who claim knowledge make mutually contradictory assertions, they cannot be stating the truth." Regarding Sceptic's point of view, Silanka in his commentary writes, as translated by Jayatilleke:

For they (i.e. the Sceptics) say that those who claim knowledge (*jñāninah*) cannot be stating actual facts since their statements are mutually contradictory, for even with regard to the category of the soul, some assert that the soul is omnipresent (*sarvagatam*) and other that it is not omnipresent (*asarvagatam*), some (say) it is of the size of a digit (*angustaparvamatram*) others that it is of the size of a kernel of a grain of millet (*syamakatandulammatram*) some say it both has form and is formless (*murtamamurtam*), some that it resides in the heart (*hrdayamadhyavartinam*) and (others) that it is located in the forehead (*lalatavyavasthitam*), etc. -- in respect of every category there is no uniformity in their assertion.

The conflicting theories of atman can be traced to Early Upanisads. The idea of atman "made of everything" (*sarvamayah, idammayah adomayah*) would be omnipresent (*sarvagatam*) (Brhadaranyaka 4.4.5) while the transcendent atman defined negatively (Brhadaranyaka 3.9.26) would not be so. Again at Katha 2.3.17 the atman is of "the size of a digit", while at Chandogya 3.14.3, the atman is "smaller than a kernel of a grain of millet". Again at Brhadaranyaka 2.3.1, Brahman which is identical with the atman is said "both to have form and also be formless." Likewise at Katha 2.3.17 the atman "resides in the heart" while at Aitareya Aranyaka 2.1.4.6 it is located in the head.

There is no one with an outstanding intellect whose statements may be regarded as authoritative; even if such a person existed, he cannot be discovered by one with a limited vision according to the maxim that "one who is not omniscient does not know everything" for it is said "how can one desiring to know that a certain person is omniscient at a certain time do so if he is devoid of that person's intellect, his knowledge and his consciousness"; owing to the absence of the knowledge of the means, it cannot properly be accomplished; it cannot be accomplished because of the mutual dependence (of the two); for it is said "without a super-knowledge (*visistaparijñana*) the knowledge of the means is not

attained and as a result there is no attainment of the super-knowledge of the object"

Knowledge cannot completely comprehend the nature of the object of knowledge, for it is said, "whatever is apprehended should have the parts, near, middle and outer but here only the near part is apprehended and not the others since it is determined by it (i.e. the nature of the object)"; as for the exhausting the atom (*paramanu-paryavasana*?) with the (knowledge of) the near portion, considering the unrepresented parts out of the three parts, it is not possible to apprehend the atom by those with a limited vision owing to the excellence of its nature; therefore, since there is no omniscient person and since one who is not omniscient cannot comprehend the nature of an object as it is constituted, since all the theorists (*sarvavadinam*) have conceived of the nature of the categories in a mutually contradictory manner and those who have claimed super-knowledge (*uttarapari-jñāninam*) are at fault (*paramdavatam*) Scepticism is best owing to the magnitude of the mistakes that arise (from claims of knowledge).

1. Who knows whether there is an arising of psychological states?
2. Who knows whether there is no arising of psychological states?
3. Who knows whether there is and is no arising of psychological states?
4. Who knows whether the arising of psychological states is impredicable?

Charvaka, originally known as Lokāyata and Bṛhaspatya, is the ancient school of Indian materialism. Charvaka holds direct perception, empiricism, and conditional inference as proper sources of knowledge, embraces philosophical skepticism and rejects Vedas, Vedic ritualism, and supernaturalism.

Ajita Kesakambali is credited as the forerunner of the Charvakas, while Brihaspati is usually referred to as the founder of Charvaka or Lokāyata philosophy. Much of the primary literature of Charvaka, the Barhaspatya sutras (ca. 600 BCE), are missing or lost. Its teachings have been compiled from historic secondary literature such as those found in the shastras, sutras, and the Indian epic poetry as well as in the

dialogues of Gautama Buddha and from Jain literature.

One of the widely studied principles of Charvaka philosophy was its rejection of inference as a means to establish valid, universal knowledge, and metaphysical truths. In other words, the Charvaka epistemology states that whenever one infers a truth from a set of observations or truths, one must acknowledge doubt; inferred knowledge is conditional.

Charvaka is categorized as a heterodox school of Indian philosophy. It is considered an example of atheistic schools in the Hindu tradition.

O, the highly wise! Arrive at a conclusion, therefore, that there is nothing beyond this Universe. Give precedence to that which meets the eye and turn your back on what is beyond our knowledge. (2.108.17)

The fire is hot, the water cold, refreshing cool the breeze of morn;

By whom came this variety ? from their own nature was it born.

There is no other world other than this;

There is no heaven and no hell;

The realm of Shiva and like regions,

are invented by stupid imposters.

— Sarvasiddhanta Samgraha, Verse 8

The enjoyment of heaven lies in eating delicious food, keeping company of young women, using fine clothes, perfumes, garlands, sandal paste... while moksha is death which is cessation of life-breath... the wise therefore ought not to take pains on account of *moksha*.

A fool wears himself out by penances and fasts. Chastity and other such ordinances are laid down by clever weaklings.

— Sarvasiddhanta Samgraha, Verses 9-12

...but how can we attribute to the Divine Being the giving of supreme felicity, when such a notion has been utterly abolished by Charvaka, the crest-gem of the atheistic school, the follower of the doctrine of Brihaspati? The efforts of Charvaka are indeed hard to be eradicated, for the majority of living beings hold by the current refrain: While life is yours, live joyously;

None can escape Death's searching eye:

When once this frame of ours they burn,

How shall it e'er again return?

...those ascetics, samaṇa and Brahmins who have orders and followings, who are teachers, well-known and famous as founders of schools, and popularly regarded as saints, like Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sanjaya Belatthiputta and Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (Mahavira)...

— Digha Nikaya, 16

Sramana in that context obviously means a person who is in the habit of performing srama. Far from separating these seers from the vedic ritual tradition, therefore, sramana places them right at the center of that tradition. Those who see them [Sramana seers] as non-Brahmanical, anti-Brahmanical, or even non-Aryan precursors of later sectarian ascetics are drawing conclusions that far outstrip the available evidence.

— Patrick Olivelle, *The Ashrama System*

Pre-Buddhist Sramana schools in Buddhist texts

Pande attributes the origin of Buddhism, not entirely to the Buddha, but to a "great religious ferment" towards the end of the Vedic period when the Brahmanic and Sramanic traditions intermingled.

The Buddhist text of the Samaññaphala Sutta identifies six pre-Buddhist Sramana schools, identifying them by their leader. These six schools are represented in the text to have diverse philosophies, which according to Padmanabh Jaini, may be "a biased picture and does not give a true picture" of the Sramanic schools rivaling with Buddhism,

Sramana movement of Purana Kassapa: believed in antinomian ethics. This ancient school asserted that there are no moral laws, nothing is moral or immoral, there is neither virtue nor sin.

Sramana movement of Makkhali Gosala (Ajivika): believed in fatalism and determinism that everything is the consequence of nature and its laws. The school denied that there is free will, but believed that soul exists. Everything has its own individual nature, based on how one is constituted from elements. Karma and consequences are not due to free will, cannot be altered, everything is pre-determined, because of and including one's composition.

Sramana movement of Ajita Kesakambali: believed in materialism. Denied that there is an after-life, any samsara, any karma, or any fruit

of good or evil deeds. Everything including humans are composed of elemental matter, and when one dies one returns to those elements.

Sramana movement of Pakudha Kaccayana: believed in atomism. Denied that there is a creator, knower. Believed that everything is made of seven basic building blocks that are eternal, neither created nor caused to be created. The seven blocks included earth, water, fire, air, happiness, pain and soul. All actions, including death is mere re-arrangement and interpenetration of one set of substances into another set of substances.

Sramana movement of Nigantha Nataputta (Jainism): believed in fourfold restraint, avoid all evil (see more below).

Sramana movement of Sanjaya Belatthiputta (Ajñana): believed in absolute agnosticism. Refused to have any opinion either way about existence of or non-existence of after-life, karma, good, evil, free will, creator, soul, or other topics.

The pre-Buddhist Indian Sramanic movements were organized Sangha-Gani (order of monks and ascetics), according to the Buddhist

text Samannaphala Sutta. The six leaders above are described as a Sanghi (head of the order), Ganacariyo (teacher), Cira-pabbajito (recluse), Yasassi and Neto (of repute and well known).

Jain literature too mentions Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla and Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta. During the life of Buddha, Mahavira and the Buddha were leaders of their śramaṇa orders. Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta refers to Mahāvīra.

According to Pande, Jainas were same as the Niganthas mentioned in the Buddhist texts, and they were a well established sect when Buddha began preaching. He states, without identifying supporting evidence, that "[Jainas] appear to have belonged to the non-Vedic Munis and Sramanas who may have been ultimately connected with pre-Vedic civilization". The śramaṇa system is believed by a majority of Jain scholars to have been of independent origin and not a protest movement of any kind, were led by Jain thinkers, and were pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic.

Some scholars posit that the Indus Valley Civilisation symbols may be related to later Jain statues, and the bull icon may have a connection to Rishabhanatha.

The Sramana Movement

- Understand the Sramana movement

Key Points

- Sramana was an ancient Indian religious movement with origins in the Vedic religion. However, it took a divergent path, rejecting Vedic Hindu ritualism and the authority of the Brahmins—the traditional priests of the Hindu religion.
- Sramanas were those who practiced an ascetic, or strict and self-denying, lifestyle in pursuit of spiritual liberation. They are commonly known as monks.
- The Sramana movement gave rise to Jainism and Buddhism.

terms

Sramana

An ancient Indian religious movement that began as an offshoot of the Vedic religion and focused on ascetic lifestyle and principles.

Brahmin

A member of a caste in Vedic Hinduism, consisting of priests and teachers who are held as intermediaries between deities and followers, and who are considered the protectors of the sacred learning found in the Vedas.

Sramanas

Sramana followers who renounced married and domestic life, and adopted an ascetic path. The Sramanas rejected the authority of the Brahmins.

Vedic Religion

The historical predecessor of modern Hinduism. The Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the Hindu religion.

ascetic

A person who practices severe self-discipline and abstention from worldly pleasures as a way of seeking spiritual enlightenment and freedom.

Sramana was an ancient Indian religious movement that began as an offshoot of the Vedic religion and gave rise to other similar but varying

movements, including Buddhism and Jainism. Sramana, meaning “seeker,” was a tradition that began around 800–600 BCE when new philosophical groups, who believed in a more austere path to spiritual freedom, rejected the authority of the Brahmins (the priests of Vedic Hinduism). Modern Hinduism can be regarded as a combination of Vedic and Sramana traditions; it is substantially influenced by both.

Vedic Roots

The Vedic Religion was the historical predecessor of modern Hinduism. The Vedic Period refers to the time period from approximately 1750–500 BCE, during which Indo-Aryans settled into northern India, bringing with them specific religious traditions. Most history of this period is derived from the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in the Hindu religion. Vedas, meaning “knowledge,” were composed by the Aryans in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE, in the northwestern region the Indian subcontinent.

There are four Indo-Aryan Vedas: the Rig Veda contains hymns about their mythology; the Sama Veda consists mainly of hymns about religious rituals; the Yajur Veda contains instructions for religious rituals; and the Atharva Veda consists of spells against enemies,

sorcerers, and diseases. (Depending on the source consulted, these are spelled, for example, either Rig Veda or Rigveda.)

Sramana Origins

Several Sramana movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE. Sramana existed in parallel to, but separate from, Vedic Hinduism. The dominant Vedic ritualism contrasted with the beliefs of the Sramanas followers who renounced married and domestic life and adopted an ascetic path, one of severe self-discipline and abstention from all indulgence, in order to achieve spiritual liberation. The Sramanas rejected the authority of the Brahmins, who were considered the protectors of the sacred learning found in the Vedas.



Emaciated Fasting Buddha. Buddha practiced severe asceticism before his enlightenment and recommended a non-ascetic middle way.

Brahmin is a caste, or social group, in Vedic Hinduism consisting of priests and teachers who are held as intermediaries between deities and followers. Brahmins are traditionally responsible for religious rituals in temples, and for reciting hymns and prayers during rite of passage rituals, such as weddings.

In India, Sramana originally referred to any ascetic, recluse, or religious practitioner who renounced secular life and society in order to focus solely on finding religious truth. Sramana evolved in India over two phases: the Paccekabuddha, the tradition of the individual ascetic, the “lone Buddha” who leaves the world behind; and the Savaka, the phase of disciples, or those who gather together as a community, such as a sect of monks.

Sramana Traditions

A “tradition” is a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society, with symbolic meaning or special significance. Sramana

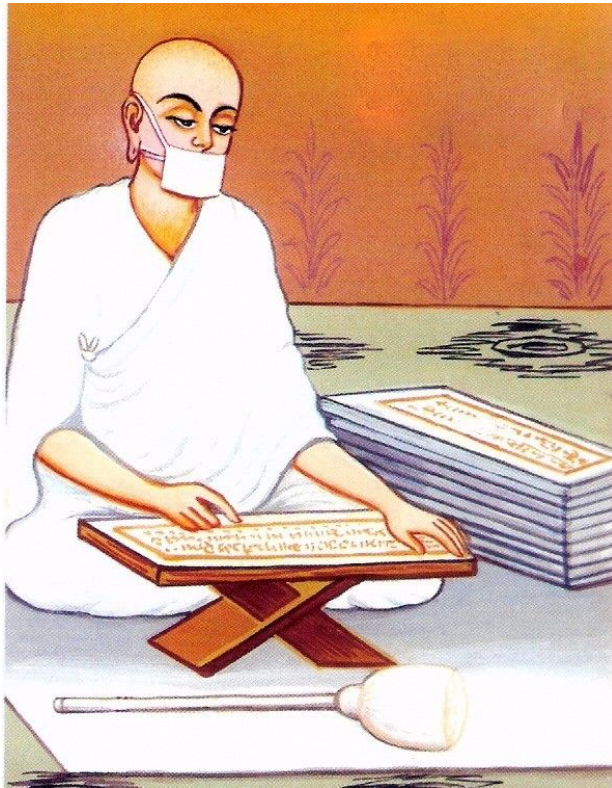
traditions drew upon established Brahmin concepts to formulate their own doctrines.

The Sramana traditions subscribe to diverse philosophies, and at times significantly disagree with each other, as well as with orthodox Hinduism and its six schools of Hindu philosophy. The differences range from a belief that every individual has a soul, to the assertion that there is no soul. In terms of lifestyle, Sramana traditions include a wide range of beliefs that can vary, from vegetarianism to meat eating, and from family life to extreme asceticism denying all worldly pleasures.

The varied Sramana movements arose in the same circles of ancient India that led to the development of Yogic practices, which include the Hindu philosophy of following a course of physical and mental discipline in order to attain liberation from the material world, and a union between the self and a supreme being or principle.

The Sramana traditions drove the so-called Hindu synthesis after the Vedic period, which spread to southern Indian and parts of Southeast Asia. As it spread, this new Hinduism assimilated popular non-Vedic gods and other traditions from local cultures, as well as the integrated societal divisions, called the caste system.

Sramaṇa traditions later gave rise to Yoga, Jainism, Buddhism, and some schools of Hinduism. They also led to popular concepts in all major Indian religions, such as saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and death, and *moksha*, liberation from that cycle.



Jain Monk in Meditation. An image of a Jain monk, one of the practitioners of the varied Sramana traditions.

Now for the big reveal!

Shiva, Vishnu, Buddha, Mahavira, Brahma, and
others...



Are one and the same

And in the future

According to **Buddhist** tradition, Maitreya is a bodhisattva who will appear on Earth in the **future**, achieve complete enlightenment, and teach the pure dharma. According to scriptures, Maitreya will be a successor to the present **Buddha**, Gautama **Buddha** (also known as Śākyamuni **Buddha**).





Kalki. In Hinduism, **Kalki** (Devanagari: कल्कि; lit. destroyer of filth), also spelled Kalkin, is the tenth **avatar** of the god Vishnu in the current Mahayuga, foretold to appear at the end of Kali Yuga, the current epoch. The **Purana** scriptures foretell that **Kalki** will be atop a white horse with a drawn blazing sword.

